

folk dance by its very nature should be the people's dance. As things are in our country, however, it seems to be the property of a few groups of addicts.

One of the main reasons, apparently, why the folk dance is confined to a "pitiful minority" is the overemphasis placed on exhibitions by folk dance leaders and organizations. Exhibitions, because of their stagey precision and, in many cases, exotic intricacy, actually discourage people from taking up folk dancing; at the same time they encourage people merely to sit and watch a dance variety show.

The reaction of two newcomers to an open-air "public" folk dance in one of our cities is symptomatic. "We came to do a little dancing," they said, "but the folk dancers looked like a bunch of professionals and we were too scared to even try. We thought folk dancing was not for us."

To be sure, the director of the open-air program invited the audience to come into the dance. But who among them could do the Zillertaler Landler or Polyanka? Of course, these dances are things of beauty and give joy to those who do them. They should be very much outnumbered, however, by the easy dances that in their simplicity are just as lovely and just as much of a delight, and much more sociable in that they can be shared by a much larger number of people. The director might have gotten general participation by leading a simple, good-neighborly partner-exchange like the Circassian Circle or the old-time Paul Jones. And the folk dancers, once or twice of an evening, might have taken partners from the audience and helped them through an easy folk mixer.

Even folk dance magazines, supposedly dedicated to the folk values, seem to pay overmuch attention to exhibitions, praising or criticizing the virtuosity, authenticity, and costumery on display. Spectacular photographs of exhibition numbers, spotlights and all, are shown on their pages. It is as though the folk dance were some sort of a circus. A caustic-tongued reader, noting such undue stress on the showy, might well ask, "Do folk dancers ever dance just for fun?"

In one of the folk dance magazines a writer commends a folk dance group for its professional-like precision. If we stop to consider the implications of such praise, we might raise some important questions. For instance, is professionalization the goal of folk dancers? If so, the folk dance is no longer the people's dance but the dance of elite groups. Indeed, it is no longer folk dance but a slick show piece.

Curt Sachs in his *World History of the Dance* points out again and again what damage professionalization does to the folk dance—how in the course of history the dance degenerates into lifeless, polished routine under the influence of dance masters and sophisticates and ever needs to be regenerated by the vigor, spontaneity, and sheer fun of the dance of the common people.

The sheer fun of the folk dance, as a robust, socialized let-go, is eloquently described under the name "hoolyeh" by Louis Denov in *Viltis* for October-November, 1954. Jitterbugs, who some assert are the true folk dancers of our times, have a picturesque phrase for this ecstatic abandon; they call it "out of the world" or "in the groove."

In his *The Dance*, John Martin tells us that in the 16th century, dancing masters had so refined the folk dance for the benefit of the nobility, that courtiers frequently slipped away from the spiritless routines of the court dance and joined the lusty dances of the peasantry to find in these "vulgar revels" the "hoolyeh" denied them.

In our own day the Hermans (Michael and Mary Ann) remind us that exhibitions are simply out of place at a folk dance. In their own apt words, "So many folk dancers

are exhibition-crazy they lost sight of the fact that folk dances were not meant for exhibitions."

Exhibition-crazy is the word for it when we consider what ludicrous extremes exhibitionism sometimes leads to. In a large city rival folk dance clubs raid each other for exhibition talent. The meetings of some folk dance clubs consist mainly of drills and rehearsals for exhibitions. At times exhibition rehearsals break up in bitter quarrels. Quarreling clubs split to form new exhibition clubs. At a folk dance camp a dancer declined to do certain dances because, she said, "They would ruin my exhibition style."

Exhibitionism inevitably tends to breed bickering, feuding, jealousy, rivalry, and snobbery. This happens in any group where the motivation is show, not share; it is all the more distressing in a folk dance group whose motto should be share. A leader of a club noted for its exhibitions complained about the constant wrangling among the members. "Drop your exhibitions," he was advised, "and dance for fun." He wouldn't do that because the sponsoring organization was receiving publicity out of the shows. He wants to have his cake and eat it too!

Another leader, who, like so many others, has had sad and sobering experiences with exhibition teams, now urges colleagues never to direct or sponsor one.

The dance demonstration for teaching and exchange purposes, of course, is something altogether different from the dance exhibition. Here the spirit and goal are radically opposite to what is involved in the exhibition. The demonstration stands for participation by all; the exhibition represents display by a few. In this connection, a recreation leader has worked out an idea well worth considering. He combines demonstration, discussion, and participation in a unified program. First, he and his partner demonstrate a number of simple folk dances from around the world, including several American; then he leads a discussion of the social and recreational values of the folk dance; and, after that, he has everyone come out on the floor and learn and enjoy a few of the easiest dances.

The fun stunts and skits that sometimes enliven an intermission period are not to be considered in the same class as exhibitions. Gaily informal, and often impromptu, they are a specially jolly phase of a dance party.

Most people don't want to strain themselves drilling for long hours, weeks, or months perfecting dances. They wisely leave that to the out and out professionals who make it their lifetime and livelihood. Ordinary folks want to relax with others and have fun in their dances. Sure, they are willing to learn, but they take their learning as a means to the homey, sociable pleasure they desire. There are innumerable simple, lovely dances that would be a delight to them. Folk dance leaders and organizations would perform a great social service by bringing these dances to the people.

If our folk dance, then, is to be, as Vyts Beliajus so well said, a social activity that is informal, pleasurable, and that means mixing and dancing with others in hearty good fellowship, it should call for much less exhibition and much more recreation.

We might draw closer to this happy goal by de-emphasizing the exhibition and emphasizing the demonstration. Folk dance clubs, instead of astounding audiences with the spectacular and exotic, could demonstrate simple, representative dances from around the world, including the charming mixers and, we must not forget, the American, all with the idea, "You too can learn these easy dances and have friendly fun with them." Everyone would benefit, for there is no greater satisfaction than spreading and sharing that which is of good cheer.



Liths in Omaha, Neb. celebrating the Jonines (St. John's festivities) on a stage. Wood and red flood lights gave the bon fire effect.

— O —

#### MY ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE KNOTTY PROBLEMS BUD FUCHS

(To an article of problems written by Sarah G. Knott in the December issue)

1. The general interest of all leaders is the same—to increase interest and participation in dance forms.
2. As for drawing lines, the best lines are crossed. All we can do is make an honest effort to use what we know are not of recent origin and have survived the onslaught of time.
3. As to reviving old dances—if they have not survived, they are not worthy of revival. If they are worthy of revival, they will keep creeping back into our dance repertoire.
4. As to newborn dances sweeping the nation deserving the name "folk", that is ridiculous. Anyone who knows the meaning of the term folk dances would scoff at this.
5. What future generation will consider best and perpetuate is no concern of ours. The future will look to itself and we can not direct it, nor determine what their needs and tastes will be.
6. Hillbilly refers to people inhabiting the Kentucky hills; and as to their place in folklore, they are an individual section of this great United States.
7. I doubt if very many people in the U. S. have ever heard real hillbilly music.
8. It would be better not to present at all anything monotonous in its complete form which would be materially abused by being cut.
9. The "festival people" should do their utmost to include folklorists in their program so that they can learn something.
10. I think festivals should be of two kinds or divided into two parts, one attended by the curious public with the object of getting people interested (which would also suit the average folk dancer), and the other for the initiated, who would appreciate the details.

#### ST. PAUL'S FESTIVAL OF NATIONS APRIL 28

Once again the International Institute of St. Paul is sponsoring their famous FESTIVAL OF NATIONS which takes place every three (or is it four) years. It is a tremendous festival in which all ethnic groups in the Twin City take part. The dates are set for the week of April 28 - May 1.

8



#### SAN DIEGO SAVES THE DAY IN HOLTVILLE

The Federation sponsored two festivals the same weekend, Bakersfield and Holtville. The former is in the extreme northern part of the Southern half while the latter is on the Mexican border in the Imperial Valley. However, since the aura of glamour is in Bakersfield and not with the carrot capitol (Holtville), Holtville got the "step-child" treatment. But San Diego came to the rescue. Six San Diego groups made their appearance: The VILTIS Dancers who presented Wengierka (Polish), Pajduška (Macedonian), Voveraitė (Lithuanian) and Reinlander (Norwegian); The Tuesday Nighters (Dir. Vivian Woll) presented the Austrian Treffnertanz; The Sierra Dancers (Evelyn Prevett and Gordy Engler) presented the Croatian Drmes; The Turner Dancers (Dr. Elizabeth Ullrich) presented the Steireger and Lithuanian Quadrille. Ernest Andrews of the Scottish group presented a sword dances and a Highland Fling. Pete Mighetto (also of San Diego) was the guest dance caller. All the folk dance groups were gathered by Vyts Beliajus. We follow up with a letter of appreciation from Faye Manley, Festival Chairman:

"Dear Vyts:

A quick note to tell you **how much** we enjoyed your dancers. All the groups were very much enjoyed by all of the local spectators, of which there were an estimated 1000 to 1500 people.

We got better acquainted with the VILTIS Dancers and they are a swell bunch of kids and they made you proud, Vyts, they did an excellent job. If it hadn't been for your dancers in the San Diego area we would not have had a Festival. Not a single exhibition group showed up from L. A. and only about 4 or 5 people. And we were supposed to have been Federation sponsored. Thanks to you, Vyts, we had a very lovely affair.

Thanks a million

Faye (Manley)

Holtville, Cal.

#### Bakersfield A Huge Success

Without doubt, this year's festival was far superior to any we have had before. As usual, Harvey Auditorium was filled to overflowing.

The East Bakersfield High School Orchestra (60 pieces) opened the festivities with a Medley of Romberg's Music, Two Guitars and The Dance of the Tumblers. All the leading square dance clubs combined forces and represented themselves in four squares performing beautifully to the calling of Larry Renshaw and to the music of King Cotton and his Hoedowners.

The local Basque teen-agers presented a jota with all the verve of youth. The boys in the troupe were recent arrivals from Europe and who belonged to traveling groups visited various Basque villages with their dances. Tony Bazdarich brought the Sdenka Kolo Dancers from San Pedro and they performed their familiar and well liked medley of kolos. The Fresno Council Workshop, in beautifully embroidered costumes presented the Ukrainian Kate-rina. The Rondeliers, a local Round Dance group, in lovely pastel ballerina-like skirts, presented a "Kiss Waltz".

Maria Luisa Espejo, a graduate of the Fine Arts Academy of Mexico City, presented an authentic Oaxacan dance in a native costume. Sta. Espejo came to Bakersfield but a few weeks earlier. She was followed by the Bakersfield A Capella Choir who sang several folk ballads. After them the Yosemite Workshop from Pasadena, did their rousing Tatarochka. Jeff Ryan led the local Greek